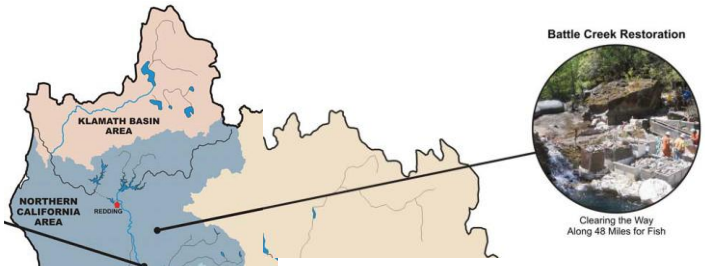
Battle Creek Salmon and Steelhead Restoration Project



Project Summary: The Battle Creek Salmon and Steelhead Restoration Project in northern California are among the largest cold-water anadromous fish restoration efforts in North America. The project involves removal of five hydropower diversion dams and construction of fish screens and ladders on three hydropower diversion dams in order to open 48 miles of premium fish spawning habitat in Shasta and Tehama counties near Manton, Calif. The project implements a 1999 Memorandum of Understanding, which was signed by the Bureau of Reclamation, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Marine Fisheries Service, the California Department of Fish and Game, and the Pacific Gas and Electric Company. In addition, the project embodies the America's Great Outdoors Initiative in many respects, including expansive ecological restoration. The project, which began with a groundbreaking in late 2010, is expected to be completed in 2015.

Strategic Value: The program seeks to achieve two primary goals: Restoration of one of the most important anadromous fish spawning streams in the Sacramento River system and minimizing the loss of hydropower production for electric customers in California. Habitat restoration and enhancement will enable safe passage, growth and recovery for threatened and endangered Chinook salmon and Central Valley steelhead trout. The restoration of Battle Creek is especially important to species such as winter-run and spring-run Chinook salmon and steelhead, which are dependent on cool water stream habitats. Battle Creek has reaches that are kept cool year-round by natural springs.

Excavating for a fish screen and ladder.

Benefits: The project is focused on increasing water flow releases and providing fish passage along 42 miles of Battle Creek and an additional six miles along its tributaries. This project would enhance natural production of endangered and threatened salmon and steelhead, while also benefitting other fish, native plants and wildlife. Improvement of fish populations would improve the reliability in State and federal water project operations and the salmon harvest. The project also minimizes loss of clean and renewable energy produced by the Battle Creek Hydroelectric Project by removing selected dams at locations in the watershed where the hydroelectric values were marginal. The public has become involved with the Restoration Project, with participation that includes the Greater Battle Creek Watershed Working Group and the Battle Creek Watershed Conservancy.